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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8072
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4043

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, PINT, AF, IBRS
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF IBRD RESREP ON NEW GOVERNMENT AND FUTURE

WORLD BANK

REFS: A. KABUL (AIDAC) 3390 B. KABUL 3766

1. I HAD A USEFUL EXCHANGE ON MAY 16 WITH JAMES THEODORES, IBRD RESREP IN KABUL, CONCERNING HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT -- HE HAS NOW CALLED ON TEN OF THE "LINE" MINISTERS -- AND HIS VIEWS ON FUTURE WORLD BANK OPERATIONS HERE. AS REPORTED BY AID DIRECTOR AND ECONCOUNS IN REFTELS (REFTEL A IS BEING REPEATED TO ISLAMABAD AND TEHRAN), THEODORES SEES THE NEW CABINET AS A MIXED BAG. SOME MINISTRIES, HE SAID, SUCH AS PUBLIC WORKS AND AGRICULTURE, COULD ONLY BE IMPROVED -- WHOEVER TOOK OVER -- THE PREVIOUS MINISTERS WERE SO HOPELESS. INTERESTINGLY, THEODORES ALSO CATEGORIZED ABDUL AZIZ FAROUGH, FORMER DEPUTY MINISTER OF PLANNING, AS HAVING BECOME ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF THE STRAIN OF OVERWORK. IN THEODORES' VIEW, THE PLANNING MINISTRY UNDER DAOUD HAD BECOME TOO POWERFUL, IN ANY EVENT, HAVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS. LACKING THE TRAINED PERSONNEL TO DISCHARGE THESE RESPONSIBILITIES,
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THE MINISTRY WAS FAST BECOMING A MAJOR BOTTLENECK RATHER THAN A FACILITATOR OF DEVELOPMENT. THUS, IN THESE THREE MINISTRIES, HE SAW IMPROVEMENT. HOWEVER, IN GENERAL, HE HAD FOUND THAT THE NEW MINISTERS HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN APPOINTED ON THE BASIS OF THEIR POLITICAL RELIABILITY, AND NOTHING ELSE. ANY MATCHING OF INDIVIDUAL SKILLS OR EXPERIENCE WITH FUCNTION SEEMED PRUELY "ACCIDENTAL".

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2. THUS, THEODORES IS CAUTIOUS ABOUT MAKING PREMATURE JUDGMENTS ON HOW WELL THE NEW CROWD WILL DO IN OFFICE. ALL SEEM ENTHUSIASTIC -- EVEN "GUNG HO" -- AND PERSONABLE, BUT THESE ATTRIBUTES DO NOT GO VERY FAR IN MANAGING A MINISTRY, HE NOTED. I AGREED THAT IT WAS MUCH TOO EARLY TO MAKE ANY JUDGMENTS, ALTHOUGH I SAID THAT I SHARED HIS OVERALL IMPRESSIONS -- AND RESERVATIONS ABOUT HOW WELL QUALIFIED MANY OF THE NEW CABINET WERE. MOREOVER, WIDESPREAD DISMISSAL OF QUALIFIED, BUT POLITICALLY SUSPECT PERSONNEL WAS CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO HELP, WE BOTH AGREED.

3. THEODORES HAS BEEN DELIVERING COPIES OF THE WORLD BANK REPORT (REFTEL B) TO EACH OF THE MINISTERS. RECEPTION OF THE REPORT HAS BEEN FAVORABLE, AND HE FEELS THAT IT MAY WELL HAVE A PROFOUND IMPRESSION ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENTAL PLANNING. HE SAID THAT, IN ADDITION TO COMMENDING THE REPORT TO THE NEW CABINET, HE HAD TAKEN A NON-NONESENSE APPROACH IN DEBUNKING FALLACIOUS IDEAS, BOTH ABOUT THE BANK'S OPERATIONS AND ABOUT DEVELOPMENT HERE. HE ALSO SAID THAT, IN RESPONSE TO SLOGANS ABOUT "AID WITHOUT CONDITIONS," HE HAD MADE PERFECTLY CLEAR THE BANK WOULD NOT RELAX OR ABANDON ITS PROJECT STANDARDS AND CRITERIA IN AFGHANISTAN, OR ANYWHERE ELSE. TO BACK UP HIS POINT, HE HAD DECLINED TO "CONTRIBUTE' TO A FUND FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO ACCOMMODATE THOSE "LEFT OUT" BY THE PREVIOUS REGIME'S EIGHTH GRADE EXAMINATIONS.
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4. COMMENT: IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THEODORES HAS GOTTEN OFF TO EXACTLY THE RIGHT START WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND THAT THIS HAS PUT FUTURE BANK OPERATIONS HERE ON A CORRECT FOOTING. HE IS LEAVING ON MAY 18 FOR A WEEK OF CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON. I BELIEVE THE ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROSPECTS HERE WHICH HE IS TAKING BACK TO HIS SUPERIORS
IS AS GOOD AS CAN BE DRAWN WITH THE ADMITTEDLY MEAGER INFORMATION WE HAVE.
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